WIKIS

Peter Bilodeau, SWLSB RECIT

The word "Wiki" derives from the Hawaiian term for "Quick, Quick". Simply put, a wiki is a website that can be modified by many users. Each user can add to a single wiki web page; edit a page dedicated to that user; or, modify a number of pages with the wiki website.

All users can be either collaborators or access to the wiki can be limited to pre-defined users. In essence, a wiki site is an interlinked collection of individual web pages.

To begin our exploration of wikis in general, point your browser to:

http://www.wikispaces.com/

Wikispaces was chosen as an exemplar in this short tutorial due to the security features it offers the educational community.


Once at the splash page, scroll down until you come to an entry entitled "**Our K-12 Plan**" on the lower right side. Click the hyperlinked text, "**Create a free K-12 plan wiki**".

This wiki plan is free and ad-free, and you can make them private for extra security for your students. K-12 wikis also come with a User Creator tool that lets you open student accounts in bulk — without student email addresses, a very definite advantage.
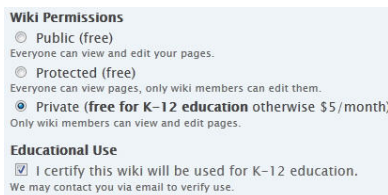
Fill out the application form on the subsequent page. At the end of the form below Wiki Permissions be sure to check off "Private" and certify that the wiki will be used for educational purposes only.

Given that Wikispaces will verify that you are a teacher, it would be wise to use your SWLSB email account to apply.

Once your application has been accepted, you will be moved to the central "**Wikispaces for Educators**" page.

Within the **pale blue panel** on the left of the page. type in the name of your wiki site. Once accepted, this will form your new URL — the web address at which people can access your site.


Keep it as short as possible and try to be unique, given that there are over 433,000 other teachers on the Wikispaces server.

Again, select "**Private**" and certify that you are a teacher. Finally, click "**Create**".
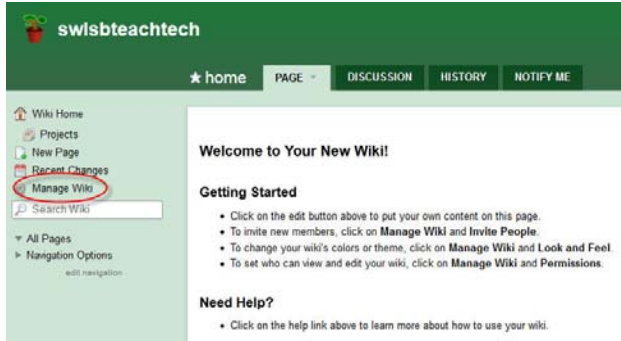
At this point, you would be well advised to look further down the page at the FAQ, specifically, the **Brief Tour** and **Wiki Walk-through**.

Your application as a teacher must be confirmed by email before you proceed. Once you have this, log out and log back in.

After you log back in, you will be directed to the **Wikispaces Dashboard**, as seen below.
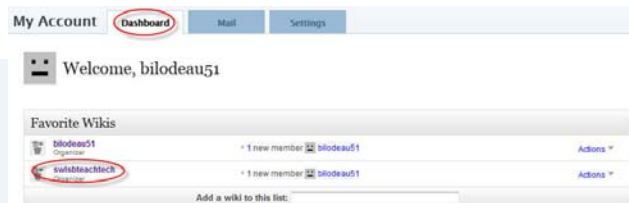
Double click on your wiki's title.

At the screen above, click "**Manage Wiki**".

At the subsequent page, find "**User Creator**" in the "**People**" section. **User Creator** will allow you to mount your entire class or classes at one time nor will they have to have email addresses.

Within the User Creator page, select the wiki you wish to work with. Follow this by creating a **list of usernames, including passwords and email addresses** in a spreadsheet (.csv, .xls, or .xlsx) or text list (comma-separated or tab-separated). The spreadsheet option is the best option.
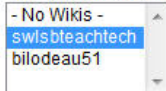
Passwords must be at least six characters long.

Create a spreadsheet listing all your students and their passwords.

Next, upload the spreadsheet to Wikispaces.

Click **Continue**.

In the **Setup** Panel, set up your class as follows:

… **Ignore the 1st row?** -Yes

… **Column containing user names?** - Column 1

… **Column containing emails?** - None

… **Column containing passwords** - Column 2

Click **Continue**.

The next step — **Verification** — checks your entries and, on the subsequent page, **Confirmation**, affirms their entry, producing a list.

Click "**Manage Wiki**" again.

Completing your class security configuration, click on **Permissions** within the **People** Section. If you've registered as a teacher with Wikispaces, you should see the "**Private**" radio button clicked and highlighted under **Wiki Permissions**.

Under **Invite-Only Memberships**, you would be wise to un-click "**Allow Membership Requests**", followed by "**Update**".

Once the above actions are completed, click "**Manage Wiki**" again.

Click "**Notifications**" within the **Tools** section. Under "**Email Notifications**", select all options, followed by "**Update**". This will allow you to moderate the wiki site. Return to the "**Manage Wiki**" page.

Given that your entire site can only hold up to 2 GB. of images, files or videos. You should monitor usage carefully. To do this, click " **Space Usage**" in the "**Tools**" section.

Within the "Settings" section, select "Look and Feel". It is here that you can configure the appearance of your wiki.

Adding Content
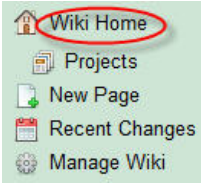
From wherever you are within your wiki site, click "**Wiki Home**" along the content panel to the left of the screen.

Once at your home page, you'll see a horizontal set of tabs. For our purposes here, we will only concern ourselves with "**Page**", "**Discussion**" and, at the far right, "**Edit**".
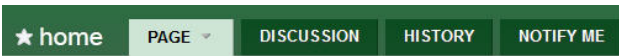
In brief, the "**Discussion**" page allows for a forum where comments can be exchanged; whereas, "**Page**" is where your content is visible to all.

However, content is placed within your wiki via the "**Edit**" tab.

To add content to your wiki home page, click the "**Edit**" tab.

You'll notice that the wiki page has been dimmed, leaving only the "**Edit**" toolbar and text area high-lighted.

The toolbar above allows for simple word process-ing and hyperlink and image insertion.

Begin by removing the greetings text.

Now add the text, "**Hello World**!" Click "**Preview**", followed by "**Save**".

Wiki Tips

- When using your wiki pedagogically, have your students plan every entry, link or image in advance. It would be best if all the content was first entered in a Word file and then, pasted into the wiki.

- Given that an entire wiki can only contain 2 GB of images. It would be best to first find an image on the 'Net, using Google Images, and link to it via **File** — **External Image**.

- It would be best if all wiki pages were teacher-created. Further, separate page per-missions can be given to separate students so that no student can sabotage another's work.

Other Wiki Resources

Wiki Help for Teachers
http://help.wikispaces.com/faq+teacher+wiki

Wikispaces Tour
http://www.wikispaces.com/content/wiki-tour

For further information or assistance,
Please contact

Peter Bilodeau,
Educational Consultant (RECIT)
pbilodeau@swlauriersb.qc.ca
450-621-5600, ext. 1358